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ABSTRACT

Part-time instructors have been increasingly in demand in adult and vocational education. The two greatest benefits an educational program realizes by employing part-time instructors are cost savings and staff flexibility. Part-time employment offers certain benefits to instructors. Particularly drawn to such teaching commitments are semiretired professionals, individuals enrolled in full-time degree programs, and people who wish to augment their income by holding a second job. Lower salaries, lack of health insurance and other benefits, and lack of negotiation power regarding raises and promotions are among the frustrating aspects of part-time employment. Because they are employed primarily for their professional competence rather than their pedagogical training, many part-time instructors lack the teaching skills and teaching experience required in the classroom. Despite the importance of professional development, few institutions offer such activities to their part-time instructors. Four broad categories of training needs are introduction to the educational setting, development of basic skills needed by part-time adult educators, refresher courses for experienced workers, and specialized courses such as counseling, assertiveness, and computers. The instructional quality of part-time faculty can be improved through orientation, education and training, evaluation, and administrative support. (Contains 13 references.) (YLB)

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ERIC Clearinghouse on Adult, Career, and Vocational Education

Part-Time Instructors in Adult and Vocational Education

by Bettina A. Lankard

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Part-time instructors represent an increasing proportion of the education work force. Special programs for adult students, such as vocational-technical training, adult basic education, workplace literacy, and English as a second language, rely heavily on the first-hand knowledge and experience that adjunct instructors bring to the classroom. Because many educational institutions and programs are facing reduced budgets and the challenge of "doing more with less," the hiring of part-time instructors offers a solution to problems of staffing and cost containment. These instructors, however, bring to educational institutions their own set of special needs. This *ERIC Digest* looks at the increased use of part-time instructors in adult and vocational education. It examines the education and training needs of part-time instructors and suggests strategies for their professional development.

Since the 1970s, part-time instructors have been been increasingly in demand across the educational community. Between 1970 and 1988, the number of part-time community college faculty increased by 164 percent compared to a 37 percent increase for full-time faculty (Ostertag 1991). In the state of New York, "the part-time instructional faculty represents 50.5 percent of the state's higher education teaching staff" (Samuel 1989, p. 42). A national evaluation of adult education programs reports more than 80 percent of adult education instructors are part time (Development Associates 1992).

Advantages and Disadvantages of Part-Time Instructors

The two greatest benefits an educational program realizes by employing part-time instructors are cost savings and staff flexibility. Part-time instructors typically are paid at a lower rate than full-time instructors, have no fringe benefits, receive no office space, and have no financial commitments for continued employment. The cost benefit of employing part-time instructors is augmented by the benefit of academic flexibility. Part-time instructors offer up-to-date knowledge and skills in specific occupational areas, linkages to business and industry, and a willingness to teach off-site classes and classes held at unusual hours–flexibility that allows a program to adjust to shifting enrollment and expand its outreach (*Proceedings* 1990). Despite the financial drawbacks, part-time employment offers certain benefits to instructors. Particularly drawn to such teaching commitments are semiretired professionals who have skills in specific occupational areas; individuals who are enrolled in full-time degree programs, particularly those in education; and people who wish to augment their income by holding a second job.

Lower salaries, lack of health insurance and other benefits, and lack of negotiation power regarding raises and promotions are among the frustrating aspects of part-time employment. Many part-time instructors are also frustrated from lack of involvement in personnel and budget matters, curriculum development, and the formulation and implementation of policy, as well as from the lack of services available to them–office space, clerical assistance, copying machines. Since they rarely come in contact with other educators, part-time instructors often feel a sense of isolation and sometimes even rejection (Smith 1990).

Because they are employed primarily for their professional competence rather than pedagogical training, many part-time instructors lack the teaching skills and teaching experience required in the classroom. A large number are not college graduates and many lack training in adult education, even though the majority of the students they teach are adults. Those with credentials in adult basic education may lack skills in functions they are increasingly called upon to perform, such as counseling, assessment, and career planning (Fairgrieve and Jimmerson 1988). Professional development of part-time adult and vocational instructors must be a priority of programs that employ them.

Professional Development for Part-Time Faculty

Despite the importance of professional development, few institutions offer such activities to their part-time instructors. In a study reported by Hoerner et al., "over 55 percent of the responding community and technical colleges rarely have part-time faculty participate in professional development activities and 48 percent rarely make professional development activities available to part-time faculty" (*Proceedings* 1990, p. 3). Adult basic education teachers in such community programs as English as a second language may be so isolated that they are unaware of such activities, even when they are available.

Rewards for participation in professional development are skewed in favor of those who work full time. Such benefits as travel funds, purchase of special equipment, release time, paid tuition, sabbaticals, and paid subscriptions to professional journals are most often directed to full-time instructors, with such intrinsic rewards as improvement of instruction and individual professionalism the primary incentives afforded part timers (ibid.).

The selection of programs most needed by the increasing numbers of part-time instructors must be considered in planning professional development activities. A 1988 research study undertaken by the Scottish Community Education Council on the training needs of part-time community education workers (Munn et al. 1989) revealed four broad categories of training needs: (1) introduction to the educational setting, (2) development of the basic skills needed by part-time adult educators, (3) refresher courses for experienced workers, and (4) specialized courses such as counseling, assertiveness, and computers. Topics most desired in a short-term training course for part-time adult instructors in Strathcona, Alberta (Ryan 1986) included methods for teaching adults, needs assessments, adult learner characteristics, and learning styles and group development. In a survey of community colleges, the topics most addressed in professional development of part-time teachers were teaching methods, computer applications, evaluation, and college mission (*Proceedings* 1990). Part-time tutors in Cheshire, England, identified training in their own subject, orientation to learn about adult education as well as to

get organizational details, and personal development as their three top needs (Summers 1991). Whether in institutional settings or working in isolation, however, part-timers can assume some responsibility for their own professional development. Imel (1990) provides guidelines for developing a personal development plan, identifying resources, and eliciting feedback.

Improving Instructional Quality of Part-Time Faculty

Orientation. "Orientation is the most critical phase in the socialization process in developing employee loyalty, commitment, and productivity" (***Proceedings*** 1990, p. 79). Part-time instructors need to be informed about policies and procedures through such activities as facility tours, a complete syllabus for each course, a handbook answering often-asked questions, information about student evaluation and performance expectations, handbooks and newsletters, inclusion on mailing lists, and social events specifically for them (Osborn 1990). Mentoring programs that pair full-time and part-time instructors are also recommended.

Education and Training. Three types of training suggested by Galbraith and Shedd (1990) are on-the-job training, inservice training, and graduate education degree programs. *On-the-job training* affords the benefit of interaction between experienced full-time teachers and their part-time counterparts. Modeling, peer groups, and mentoring relationships are some of the ways to help less-experienced instructors improve their teaching. *Inservice training*, usually short term, focuses on specific topics in workshops, seminars, or other group training sessions. Topics should be relevant to the needs of part-time staff and the training offered at times they can attend. Incentives should be offered and communicated through newsletters, memos, posters, and other media. *Graduate degree programs* should be encouraged–especially enrollment in courses in adult education, curriculum and instruction, and instructional design.

Evaluation. The terms of evaluation must be determined by the administrators and communicated to part-time teachers when they are hired. Peer observations and reviews, supervisor reports, one-on-one interactions on the job and in various inservice training sessions provide relevant feedback from experienced staff and supervisors. At Sinclair Community College, mentoring programs "provide instructional support for new part-time faculty and those whose performance is in further need of development, improve coordination of instruction between full- and part-time faculty, recognize the needs and problems of part-time faculty at the satellite centers, improve evaluation of part-time faculty, strengthen the professional relationships between full- and part-time faculty, [and] improve retention of part-time students by improving the performance levels of part-time faculty" (Hosey et al. 1990, p. 5).

Administrative Support. Spotlighting part-time instructors and their works/accomplishments across the institution gives testimony to the importance of their role. "An occasional nonthreatening visit, accompanied by a few words of genuine interest by the division chair, dean, or president is held in the highest esteem by part-time faculty" (***Proceedings*** 1990, p. 70). Pay and benefits are topics for continual review. "If possible, pay and benefits should be comparable to those received by full-time for equal qualifications and equal work. This might mean increasing the workload to include office hours and institutional service for those who want more involvement" (ibid., p. 135.). Part-time teachers should be encouraged to increase their involvement in the institution. Inviting them to meetings scheduled at times that are convenient to them and holding special meetings for them are two positive steps in this direction.

The following recommendations offer guidance for enhancing the quality of part-time instructors' performance (ibid.): (1) improve salary structures to reward part-time teachers who are involved in professional development; (2) encourage them to engage in more instructional-related activities; (3) promote collegiality between full- and part-time instructors; (4) alter office hours of regular staff so that they interact with part-time staff; and (5) review institutional policies as they affect professional development activities.

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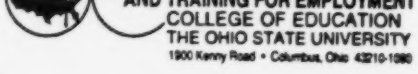
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